

IN THE BLEAK MIDWINTER

Gustav Holst
Arranged by Brendan McBrien

INSTRUMENTATION

Conductor Score	1
Violin I	8
Violin II	8
Viola	5
Cello	5
String Bass	5

From the composer of *The Planets* comes this beloved Christmas carol. Voted the “best carol” in a 2008 *BBC Music* magazine poll, this lesser-known tune is a touching and beautiful work by one of England’s greatest composers. This lush setting features all sections of the orchestra.

PROGRAM NOTES

Gustav Holst composed his Advent hymn “In the Bleak Midwinter” in 1905 at the request of Ralph Vaughan Williams for inclusion in the *English Hymnal* of 1906. The words were taken from a poem of the same name by the 19th-Century English poet Christina Rossetti. Rossetti wrote this poem in 1871 for a Christmas edition of *Scribner’s Monthly*. Holst’s tune is known as “Cranham,” after a village in Gloucestershire where he lived at the time, and it was there that he wrote the music. The house is now called “Midwinter Cottage” to commemorate that work. Since its creation it has become a cherished Christmas carol, performed and recorded by some of music’s greatest artists. In 2008, the *BBC Music* magazine polled the world’s 51 leading choir directors and experts to find the top 50 Christmas carols of all time. “In the Bleak Midwinter” came in at number 1, an enormous honor for this little-known holiday gem.

Not having entered the pantheon of carols like “Joy to the World” and “Silent Night,” this subtle offering, with its simple and humble character, can be summed up in the final verse of the hymn:

What can I give him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a Wise Man, I would do my part;
Yet what I can, I give him: give my heart.

The ending of this arrangement quotes “The First Noel” as a way to underscore Rossetti’s text and its description of the first Christmas. “The First Noel,” also an English carol, coincidentally was published the same year as Rossetti’s poem.



In the Bleak Midwinter

CONDUCTOR SCORE
Duration - 4:00

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Arranged by Brendan McBrien

Affettuoso (♩ = 74)

Violins

I

II

Viola

Cello

String Bass

Vlms.

I

II

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

4 5 6 7

9

Vlns. I *mp*

Vlns. II *mp*

Vla. *mp*

Cello *mp*

Str. Bass *mp*

8 9 10 11

Vlns. I *mf*

Vlns. II *mf*

Vla. *mf*

Cello *mf*

Str. Bass *mf*

12 13 14 15 16

17

Vlns. I *mp*

Vlns. II *mp*

Vla. *mp*

Cello *mp*

Str. Bass

17 18 19 20

Vlns. I *p*

Vlns. II *p*

Vla. *p*

Cello *p*

Str. Bass

21 22 23 24

25

Vlns. I *pp*

Vlns. II *pp*

Vla. *pp*

Cello

Str. Bass

25 26 27 28 *mp* 29

33

Vlns. I *mf*

Vlns. II *mf*

Vla. *mf*

Cello

Str. Bass

30 31 32 33

I
Vlns.
II
Vla.
Cello
Str. Bass

mp
mp
mp
mp
mp

34 35 36 37

This musical score covers measures 34 to 37. It features five staves: Violins I and II, Viola, Cello, and String Bass. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#). The score includes various musical notations such as eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and dynamic markings. A crescendo hairpin is present in measures 35 and 36. The dynamic marking *mp* (mezzo-piano) is indicated at the beginning of measure 37 for all parts.

I
Vlns.
II
Vla.
Cello
Str. Bass

mf
mf
mf
mf
mf

38 39 40 41

This musical score covers measures 38 to 41. It features five staves: Violins I and II, Viola, Cello, and String Bass. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#). The score includes various musical notations such as eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and dynamic markings. A crescendo hairpin is present in measures 38 and 39. The dynamic marking *mf* (mezzo-forte) is indicated at the beginning of measure 40 for all parts.

Vlns. I

Vlns. II

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

42 43 44

f

Vlns. I

Vlns. II

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

45 46 47 48

mp

I Vlns.

II Vlns.

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

pizz.

mf

arco

49 50 51 52

I Vlns.

II Vlns.

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

53 54 55 56 57

56

Vlns. I
Vlns. II
Vla.
Cello
Str. Bass

mf *cresc.*

58 59 60 61

Vlns. I
Vlns. II
Vla.
Cello
Str. Bass

f *cresc.*

62 63 64 65

Vlns. I

Vlns. II

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

ff *f* *ff* *f* *ff* *f*

66 67 68 69 70

poco rall.

Vlns. I

Vlns. II

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

mf *mp* *p* *mf* *mp* *p* *mf* *mp* *p* *mf* *mp* *p*

71 72 73 74